

EXHIBIT 4
DATE 1-18-07
HB 2

Shyla Patera
North Central Independent Living Services
1120 25th Avenue North East
Black Eagle ,Montana 59414

Representative Edith Clark Chair Joint Appropriations Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

Madame Chair and fellow committee Members:

My name is Shyla Patera . I am an Independent Living Specialist employed by North Central Independent Living Services located in Black Eagle, Montana. North Central Independent Living Services serves north central Montana. North Central Independent Living Services is a Center for Independent Living that assists individuals with disabilities to live in communities. A Center for Independent Living has four core services: Advocacy, Information and Referral, Peer Support and Skills Training. The four centers for Independent Living offers self directed personal assistance services where an individual with a disability can hire train and if necessary fire an attendant. This person helps someone with a disability who needs personal assistance maximize independence.

As a Montanan with a disability who has benefitted greatly from Disability Services Division Services, I urge you to support Governor Schweitzer's Disability Services Division Budget. Funding from Vocational Rehabilitation allowed me to obtain my Bachelor of Arts degree from Montana State University in 1993. Knowing this as both a professional and citizen, I ask you to particularly support the Division Package request for the Montana Youth Leadership Forum for \$100,000 over the Biennium. I also support the creation of 1.00 FTE for a Vocational Transitions Counselor. This budget request is for \$107,167 over the biennium. These two programs open opportunities for our young leaders with disabilities. We have young adults with disabilities who have much to offer our state. I want to make sure that

young Montanans with disabilities know that they can achieve dreams and the possibilities are endless. There will be struggles and challenges, but learning about advocacy from mentors is far better than navigating disability services alone. I also support the special revenue authority request of the MTAP or the Montana Telecommunications Access Project. Increasing access to communication is paramount for all! I also support the 2.5% provider rate increase because it allows agencies to find innovative ways to serve Montanans with disabilities. For a Center for Independent Living ^{there's} often means teaching advocacy skills and promoting accessible communities throughout Montana.

Access and Disability are nonpartisan! Many of these proposals outlined within the budget assist Montanans with disabilities and the agencies who serve us to experience life and to participate in communities throughout Montana. Montanans with disabilities deserve programs and budgets for those programs which will allow us to maximize our independence. Thank you for allowing me to testify and also for your deliberation on the DSD budget.